DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 028 529 EA 002 129

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Recruitment Processes and the Composition of State Boards of Education.

Pub Date Feb 69

Note-24p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Amer. Educ. Res. Assn. (Los Angeles, Calif., Feb. 6-8, 1969).

EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$1.30

Descriptors-Elections, Motivation, *Recruitment, Rewards, *Selection, *State Boards of Education

The process of selecting State school board members has been of continuing concern for scholars of State educational administration. A widely accepted hypothesis asserts that the composition of State boards of education is a function of the selection process. Evidence collected in a national survey of State board members challenges this longstanding proposition by showing that board members, regardless of how they are selected (appointment or election), comprise a singularly homogenous population. To explain this result, the selection processes were examined in detail. In the appointment process it was found that governors usually have little direct contact with appointees and secure candidates through friends, professional interests, or political necessity. The election process was universally low keyed and low financed, with little campaign or attention to issues. Furthermore, the State board is rarely a steppingstone to higher office. The reason board members are so much alike is that no one expects the board to be very influential in making or implementing State educational policy. Therefore, only universalistic and undifferentiating standards of public service are applied in selecting board members. (TT)

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# Recruitment Processes and the Composition of State Boards of Education

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> No more helpful service could be rendered our states for a decade or two to come, than for those who are or would be educational leaders to set themselves to a serious study of the problems relating to proper state educational organization, administration, finance, and control. If this is done, in a decade or two we may hope to find the results of such a study in better state educational legislation and in better state boards of education, and state departments of education control.
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> --Ellwood P. Cubberley, State School Administration, 1927

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A paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Los Angeles, February 6-8, 1969.

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Recruitment Processes and the Composition of State Boards of Education

The process of selecting state school board members has been of continuing con cern for scholars of state educational administration. Works from Cubberley,[1] 1927, to at least Knezevich,[2], 1963, have made unabashed recommendations regarding the "proper" selection of state board members. More recent works also understand the selection process to be an important aspect of the state educational system.[3]

The thesis implied through our long concern with selection of state board members appears to include the following relational propositions: (1) the state board is an important actor in the state educational system; (2) the importance of the board and the policies of the board are in large measure determined by the characteristics of board members; (3) the composition of the board is a function of the selection process. Therefore, to explain or influence board policy we need to understand how persons become board members.

Taking just statements (2) and (3), and the therefore statement, provides a logical syllogism. Indeed, the only difficulty with this set of relational propositions is that taken together they are not readily

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[1] Ellwood P. Cubberley, State School Administration (New York: Houghton-Mifflin, 1927), 229ff.

[2] Stephen Knezevich, Administration of Public Education (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1963), 172.

[3] Roald F. Campbell, Luverne L. Cunningham, and Roderick F. McPhee, Organization and Control of American Schools (Columbus: E. Merrill, 1965) 55-65/

testable--there are so many additional variables in the determination of board policy. Less defensible is the observation that we have made little effort to confirm even the most easily confirmable statement: that board composition is a function of the selection process.

We have reported previously upon evidence which suggests that state board members, regardless of how they are selected, comprise a singularly homogeneous population.[1] Contrary to conventional wisdom, and the assertions or assumptions in many of our texts, there seem to be few distinctions between appointed and elected board members. They do not differ significantly in terms of years of service or age (median between 51 and 55 yrars). State board members are predominately professionals earning high incomes (mode response, $25,000 or more). Eighty-one percent of the state board members, again with little absolute and no significant difference according to method of selection, have a four year college degree; forty percent have obtained an M.A. degree or better. Contrary to the expectations for "lay boards" nearly fifty percent have had some teaching experience, twenty percent have made careers of teaching and/or administration, forty-five percent have served on local boards. Regardless of method of selection, state board members are home-state persons, three-fourths having lived in no more than two states, almost half having lived only in one state. Finally, we found no difference on a measure of "political activism": eighty-four percent of the respondents have never been an unsuccessful candidate for public offfice.

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[1] This research was reported at the annual meeting of the California Educational Research Association in Berkeley, March 15 and 16, 1968. Available in mimeo from the writer.

As there are several radically different methods of selecting state board members, but all seem to produce the same type of member, we must reject the proposition that board composition is a function of the type of selection process. Rejecting propositions, of course, is relatively easy. It is not so easy to explain why such a reasonable proposition does not stand empirical testing. It was our contention that explanation for the failure of the proposition is to be found in more careful examination of the selection processes. The research reported here is simply an analysis of the appointment and election processes, presented with an eye toward explaining the failure of a cherished proposition.

We have gathered information appropriate to examination of the board selection processes from a questionnaire mailed to the total population of state school board members (excluding Florida and Mississippi which have boards composed entirely of ex officio members, and ex officio members from other boards). The questionnaire was 12 printed pages in length, was developed from interviews with twenty-five board members in eleven states, and was modified after being pretested on a handful of retired state board members. Information was gathered under three headings: (1) Who are the Board Members? (2) Becoming a Board Member, and (3) The Role of the Board.[1]

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[1]Information regarding demographic and ideological characteristics of state board members as well as their self-role perceptions, is presented in Gerald E. Sroufe, "Selection Procedures and Self-role Expectations of State School Board Members: An Exploratory Description and Analysis" (Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Education, University of Chicago, in process).

The National Association of State Boards of Education kindly encouraged its members to respond to the questionnaire. Using traditional but persistent follow-up procedures, a seventy percent response has been received to date. Data reported here, however, represent responses of but sixty-four percent of the population because it was deemed unnecessary to investigate this area further in the most recent follow-up effort.

Incividuals necessarily become state school board members through a process of appointment or election. We will examine the process of becoming a state school board member through either of these general routes, and also particular selection processes wuch as special non-partisan elections.

## From Private Citizen to Candidate

A good deal of attention has been given to the study of motivations of persons seeking positions on local boards of education.[1] But a prior question must be asked in the study of state school board members: How do persons become aware of the state board as a public position which they might serve, whatever their motivation?

There appear to be two streams of activity which might lead a well-educated, successful, and generally high status person to the state board of education. One is the familiar route of gaining increasingly

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[1]Most divide the motives of local board members into two or three categories reflecting self or special interest, civic duty, or altruism. See Neal Gross, Who Runs Our Schools? (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1958), chap. vii,; and Donald McCarty, "School Board Membership: Why Do Citizens Serve?" Administrators' Notebook , Vol. VIII, No. 1 (September 1959).

responsible experience at the local level and then moving on to some state study groups or special commissions, and finally to the state board.[1] The alternative and less common route is for an individual to gain eminence within a non-educational sector and be "tapped" for the board. These patterns were suggested during the pilot interviews and substantiated through analysis of the responses to the questionnaire; they are not associated with a particular model of selection.

Persons are likely first to consider service upon the state board of education at the urging of friends or political leaders; issues, as shown in Table 1, are not of primary importance as a source of first interest in the state board. When issues are given as the reason for an individual's first interest in the board, they most often prove to be of the order "need to improve schools" or "lack of leadership at the state level," and only infrequently as specific as "school district consolidation." At the time of selection, the state board members do not seem to be persons with highly specific and well-differentiated educational goals.

Almost half of the appointed board members state that their interest in serving on the state board of education was the result of the encouragement of political leaders. This high percentage is the result of a unique feature of appointed boards--the instant board member.

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[1]Robert A. Dahl, Who Governs? (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961), pp. 155-59, describes the experiential pattern of becoming a board member in New Haven; no one has yet chronicled the pattern for state school board members.

TABLE 1. Sources of first interest in service on the state board of education.

| | Means of Selection | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Appointed | Elected | Total |
| | n = 130 | n = 81 | n = 211 |
| | % | % | % |
| Source of first interest: | | | |
| encouragement of political leaders | 49 | 17 | 37 |
| encouragement of friends | 16 | 30 | 21 |
| over-riding importance of an issue or issues | 9 | 19 | 13 |
| combinations: | | | |
| professional groups/political leaders | 5 | 1 | 2 |
| friends/political leaders | 3 | 1 | 1 |
| other | 9 | 14 | 9 |

The Appointed Board: Securing the Nomination and Aftermath

Many appointed board members have given little or no thought to the state board of education prior to their nomination to it. Their first consideration of the work of the board is often the day the Governor or his aid calls to seek their acceptance of the nomination. This "instant board member" procedure was reported by all but one of the appointed members interviewed in the pilot study, and is also the experience reported by many of the respondents. Consider the following, each from a different state:

> Came as a complete surprise. . . . Governor asked me to come to his office--never stated reason.
>
> Governor appointed me and that was it.
>
> The Governor called one morning (absolutely without warning) and said he would like to appoint me to the state board of education.

> Was called by the Governor to see if I would accept the appointment--came as a surprise to me.
>
> One of the Governor's local area (unofficial) representatives--a friend of mine--asked if I would be interested in being appointed.
>
> The Governor asked me if I would serve. I agreed to do so to the best of my ability. . . . I had no knowledge of my consideration until the Governor called.
>
> Appointment came out of the blue.

These comments suggest that many persons selected through the appointment procedure did not anticipate service on the board. Further, in the pilot interviews such persons were so candid as to suggest that their initial reaction to the Governor's call was, "What does the state board of education do?" According to our findings, seventy percent of the persons appointed to the state school board reported that they were "surprised" or "mildly surprised" to receive the nomination.

Persons appointed "out of the blue" are most likely to be included among the one third indicating that they were quite, or completely, unfamiliar with the work of the board one week prior to their nomination to it. They are likely to have had little prior experience with the state educational system. They are persons nominated by the Governor more or less unilaterally, a process encouraged by the necessity in many states of appointing a certain number of representatives from the alternative party, of special economic sectors, or ethnic groups.

Within the group that was not surprised to receive the nomination are the deserving and the not-so-deserving. Persons active in state educational reforms or reorganizations, members of special task forces, are likely to be sought as potential board members. They will have known

the board as an educational institution, and will be sophisticated in at least some educational matters. Their actual appointment may come as a surprise to them but only because it was unsolicited.

Another category of appointed board members not surprised by their nomination consists of those who "campaign" actively for it. This group encourages persons to write letters to the Governor in their behalf, uses whatever party influence they may have, and seeks support from professional educational associations.

Partisan political considerations are not foreign to the appointment procedures, as is illustrated by the following responses to an open-ended question:

> I received dual support for my appointment: 1_ our state legislator and his political friends; 2) the county PTA office.
>
> A fellow superintendent presented my name to the Governor. The Governor checked all names out with advisors, the _____State Teachers Association, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, and the County Chairman of the _____Party.
>
> Political endorsement is usually necessary, especially if the Governor is not personally acquainted with the person.
>
> . . . friends, community leaders, legislators, etc. who wróte the Governor on my behalf influenced his selection. Also political empathy--not necessarily party leadership--is essential.
>
> He (Governor) usually uses his own judgment and thereby in a measure pays his own political debts.

In all but one of the states using the appointment model of selection the Governor is responsible for making the appointment. (In Montana the chief state school officer appoints board members with the consent of the Governor.) But appointment by the Governor does not preclude others from access to the nominating process. Indeed, our respondents offer

evidence that many groups are influential in suggesting nominees to the Governor. Table 2 presents a ranking of persons or groups felt to be most influential in nominating candidates. Members of the legislature and party officials outside the legislature are believed by fifty percent of the board members to be of first importance in suggesting candidates In the pilot interviews two board members stated that they knew the Governor and asked him for the appointment; two others indicated in marginal notations on the questionnaire that they had successfully pursued a similar strategy.

TAB:E 2/ Categories of persons considered most influential in nominating candidates to the state board of education.

| Influentials | Respondents assigning first rank % |
|---|---|
| political party member, outside the legislature | 30 |
| members of the legislature | 19 |
| current board members | 16 |
| chief state school officer | 12 |
| state education association | 11 |
| Governor's aids and advisors | 3 |
| other school groups | 2 |
| other (variety of noncombinable categories) | 7 |

The chief state school officer's influence in nominating board members is not necessarily determined by the legal structure. One respondent in a state in which the chief state school officer has no formal role in the nominations wrote that the CSSO "nominated or suggested" persons to the Governor; a respondent from another state with an equivalent structure wrote

an emphatic "0" to indicate his assessment of the role of the CSSO in the nominating process.

In three of the northern states a special advisory committee draws up a list of nominees from which the Governor selects board appointees. In most states the procedure is not formally structured and is largely invisible to the citizens (as is suggested by the relatively large number expressing surprise at learning of their nomination). That the system of securing nominations in most states is not rationalized does not imply that it is more or less desirable. However, one respondent from a non-rationalized state volunteered the suggestion that "state educational groups ought to submit several nominations from which the Governor might appoint, but not feel restricted."

Most board members express their willingness to accept nomination to the board immediately upon being notified of their candidacy, and ninety-five percent do so within one week. Most persons contacted will be appointed pro forma by the Governor if they can give assurance that they will be willing to serve. However, in some instances the Governor has required a private interview with the candidate to insure, as one respondent stated, "that he gets no kooks."

Generally, approval of the state senate or an advisory group is also necessary, and it is interesting to examine this "seconding" process as well as the nominating procedures described above. Seventeen of the states require that the Governors' nomination receive the consent or confirmation of the senate, three states require approval by the legislature, and three states provide a special, independently elected council for this purpose.

The remaining seven states do not require that the Governors' appointment meet with the approval of any other body, and they are not considered in the following discussion.

The Governors' nominations are unlikely to be rejected. Sixty-one percent of the respondents are not familiar with any instances of rejection; forty-six percent believe the consent of the senate or other concurring body to be a complete formality, another fifty-two percent believe approval to be controversial only occasionally.

Anecdotal notations allow us to examine more closely those board members stating they knew of someone rejected by the concurring body. Respondents from three states account for forty percent of those indicating they knew of a rejection. In these states the rejection cited appears to be of an episodic nature. For example, one respondent said that "we have about one rejection in a decade." And from another state, "There was some troulbe about five years ago, I don't know the details." It seems accurate to portray the concurring bodies consideration of the governors' appointments to the state board as mostly a formality.

## Elected Boards: Running the Race

Except for the participants themselves, and those intimately involved in the government of state education, state school board elections are non-events. One would have to expect that most of the voting population are no more informed, or interested, about the state board members they elect than they are about elected university trustees. Election "campaigns" are modest events in expenditures (none),[1] competition (little),

[1] We did not request specific information regarding expenditures. Extensive campaign funding information is presen t ed by Marius Garofalo,

and the level of interest aroused, and in terms of the demands made upon the candidates.

There are three sub-groups of recruitment models for election of board members: (1) partisan elections, either statewide or on a district basis; (2) popular elections, nominally non-partisan; (3) and elections by special sub-groups of professional educators.

Perhaps the most frequently mentioned aspect of recruitment by election is the fear that "good men won't run." Several of the appointed board members interviewed during the pilot interviews expressed this fear, one stating that if his position were an elected one, he would run for Congress instead. "Why go to all that trouble to be elected to the state school board?"

It would appear that fear of the consequences of having to endure an election campaign is ungrounded. As may be seen in the following tables, about half of the elected respondents do not campaign at all, and even the relatively vigorous campaigners operate at a low level of activity. The median board member spends less than twenty-five hours campaigning, makes one speech, issues one press release, and does not appear on either radio or television.

How many opponents is a candidate likely to face in campaigning for an elected board? In those states having the equivalent of a primary,[1]

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"The Origins and Establishment of a State Board of Education in Ohio" (Ph.D. dissertation, the Ohio State University, 1958). He indicates that the average expenditure of successful candidates was about $350 in 1955. The median appears to have been less than $100.

[1]It is difficult to determine whether a primary election is held by relying solely upon the state statute or other reference books depicting the means of recruiting state board members. There does not seem to be a primary, other than in the caucus sense, in the special-election boards; there is a primary in at least two of the non-partisan boards, and there is a primary in each of the partisan boards.

a candidate for a non-partisan board is likely to face four or more opponents in the primary, a partisan candidate may anticipate one opponent but is equally likely to finde none or two. In the regular election partisan candidates will probably have one opponent, non-partisan candidates either one or two,candidates in the special election from one to four opponents.

One function of the partisan system, and the accompanying primary, appears to be the restricting of candidates. The structure mitigates against having eight candidates for a position, a situation confronted by two respondents seeking election to non-partisan boards.

How much campaigning is required of a serious candidate? Eighty-five percent of those serving on special election boards, forty-one percent of those on non-partisan boards, and only thirty-three percent of those on partisan boards spent under seventy-five hours on their campaigns. Estimates of time expended by the "most active" members, Table 3, below, are in the same direction: the amount of the activity increases from special election procedures to non-partisan campaigns, and still further to partisan campaigns. The difference between the number of respondents estimating that the average candidate spends over seventy-five hours in campaign activities is statistically significant, and we must reject the hypothesis of no difference between the activities of the three types of elected boards ($x^2 \cdot 2df = 8.76$). The difference between non-partisan elected boards and partisan elected boards is not statistically significant.

The number of hours one spends in an activity is often difficult to assess--one fifth of the respondents were unable to reply to this question--

TABLE 3. Number of hours spent in campaigning for elected school board positions, "most active candidate."

| Election type (n) | special (11) | non-partisan (19) | partisan (19) | total (49) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| number of hours spent in campaigning: | | | | |
| under twenty-five | 55% | -- | 5% | 15% |
| under seventy-five | 9 | 42 | 15 | 24 |
| | 64 | 42 | 20 | 39 |
| over seventy-five | 36 | 11 | 79 | 61 |

but the number of speeches, press releases, and appearances on television should be more easily recalled. The response rate to these items is much higher, only three persons were unable to respond.

Respondents from special election boards were not likely to have given any campaign speeches. However, Table 4, below, shows that seventy percent of the non-partisan boards gave speeches and that forty-five

TABLE 4. Number of speeches of candidates to elected boards of education.

| | Special (16) | non-partisan (27) | partisan (28) | total (71) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| number of speeches; | | | | |
| none | 63% | 30% | 43% | 42% |
| one | 25 | 19 | 18 | 20 |
| two-four | 12 | 3 | 15 | 10 |
| five-eight | -- | 3 | 4 | 2 |
| more than eight | -- | 45 | 22 | 25 |

percent gave more than eight speeches; one member gave twenty-one speeches. Fewer of the partisan board members gave more than eight speeches, but otherwise the pattern of speechmaking activity is similar for the partisan and non-partisan boards.

In terms of the number of press releases issued, the non-partisan and partisan boards again reveal almost identical distributions, while the special election board suggests almost complete inactivity. As may be seen in Table 5, the typical candidate for an elected board issues just one press release. Although not shown in the table, three candidates (two non-partisan and one partisan) issued more than seventeen press releases.

TABLE 5. Number of press releases issued by candidates for elected boards of education.

| Election type: number | special (16) | non-partisan (27) | partisan (30) | total (73) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| none | 81% | 41% | 37% | 48% |
| one | -- | 26 | 33 | 23 |
| two | 13 | 7 | 3 | 7 |
| three | 6 | 4 | 7 | 5 |
| four or more | -- | 22 | 20 | 16 |

It would be interesting to know how radio and/or television were used in the campaigns for elected state boards of education. Unfortunately, space considerations required that the respondents be questioned only regarding their use or non-use of these media. While seventy percent of the candidates for non-partisan boards used these media, only forty percent of the candidates for partisan boards, and but six percent of those from special-election boards used them.

## The Intangible Prize

State school board members receive no monetary compensation for their services, and wish none; they receive little public recognition

to speak of, nor do they wish it, and the possibility of their moving from the board of education to a "higher" public position is remote. Why, then, do they serve? An examination of board members' motivations is called for, but a mailed questionnaire schedule seemed an inappropriate tool for this research effort, and such study remains to be undertaken. In this section we will focus most upon the question of what a board member may expect as the outcome of his years on the board.

In no state is an attempt made to compensate state school board members for their time and services beyond a minimal per diem and/or expenses payment. Indeed, figures for the 1963-1964 year suggest that a total of only $269,000 was expended for travel and compensation for all 492 of the nation's state board members.[1] Apparently, about $548 is "behind each board member to compensate for his expenses and time over the course of a year.

State board members may expect to be compensated for their expenses, but little more. From a recent study of state boards of education one draws the conclusion that $25 per day and expenses is "tops."[2] Of eleven states surveyed in 1966-1967 four provided only expenses; three provided expenses and less than twenty dollars per day, three provided expenses and twenty dollars per day, and one state allows expenses and twenty-five dollars per day.

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[1] Statistics of State School Systems 1963-1964 (Washington, D.C.: Office of Education, Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1967), Table No. 32, p. 61.

[2] The Role and Policymaking Activities of State Boards of Education (Denver: National Association of State Boards of Education, 1967), p. 6.

Some have advocated that state board members be compensated more realistically for time spent on board activities. State board members themselves, however, will have nothing to do with this notion. Eighty-six percent of the respondents, equally divided between appointed and elected board members, indicated that they felt it was more appropriate for a board member to receive only a per diem and/or expenses.

If an alternative to monetary compensation is to be sought as motivation for service on the board one might look to the possibility of using the board as a stepping stone to higher, possibly more rewarding, office. Table 6 presents responses to the questions, "Do you know of any persons who have moved from the state board into other public positions?" Almost seventy percent of the appointed board members replied in the negative, while fifty-six percent of the elected board members indicated that they knew such persons. These differences are substantial and significant ($x^2 \cdot 1df = 10.78$), and it appears as though there is some support for the

TABLE 6. Percentage of state school board members knowing persons who have moved from the board to other public positions.

| | Elected Boards | Appointed Boards | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| do not know of persons going to other public positions | 44% | 67% | 59% |
| do know of persons going to other public positions | 56 | 33 | 41 |
| | n = 75 | n = 148 | n = 223 |

contention that elected boards may serve as a stepping stone to higher office. Before reaching this conclusion, however, investigation must be made of the positions accepted by persons leaving the board.

Table 7 presents a breakdown of public positions taken by ex-board members. Although the figures presented above in Table 6 are not incorrect, they are clearly misleading. It is true that ninety-one board members know of persons moving to other public positions, but it is also true that they are mostly talking about the same few persons. The ninety-one persons represent only twenty-one states, and as seen in Table 7, only a total of thirty-eight persons may be identified as having moved from the state board to another public position. No more than twenty-three persons appear to have moved from the board into clearly political positions, and we must reject, apparently, the notion that the state school board may realistically be viewed as a stepping-stone to higher office.

No significance may be attached to the differences between elected and appointed boards when we examine the number of persons actually moving into higher office, or the number of boards of each type that have experienced such mobility. Forty-five percent of the thirty-three appointed state boards identified persons going on to other positions; forty-six percent of the elected boards did so.

Clearly, if 244 respondents can identify only thirty-eight persons moving from the board to other public positions, acceptance of the responsibility of becoming a state school board member may not reasonably be attributed to expectations of future high office.

If we consider that the median board member is between fifty-one

and fifty-five years of age, that the median term of a state board member is six years, and that the evidence indicates they do not go from the board to other positions, we may support a thesis that service upon the state board of education represents a capstone to a career of public service, rather than a stepping-stone.

TABLE 7. Positions taken by persons moving from the state board of education to other public positions.

| | Appointed | | Elected | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Position | Number | Position | Number |
| UPWARD | | | | |
| political | State Senator | 3 | Secretary of Navy | 1 |
| | State Representative | 1 | U.S. House of Representatives | 2 |
| | Judge | | State Senate | 3 |
| | Racing Commissioner | | State Legislature | 3 |
| | | | Judge | 3 |
| non-political | CSSO | 2 | Board of Higher Education | 2 |
| | College President | | | |
| political | Mayor | 1 | City Council | 1 |
| HORIZONTAL | | | | |
| non-political | State Department of Education | 3 | - - - - | |
| | Highway Board | 2 | | |

In Table 8 data are presented which indicate that eighty-two percent of the appointed board members and ninety-five percent of the elected members feel they may serve at least two terms; eighteen percent believe themselves likely to serve only one term. Given the length of the terms, it would appear that many members view service on the state board as their

public service up to retirement age. The differences between elected and appointed board members anticipating service of one or two terms and those anticipating indefinite or almost indefinite service is not statistically significant ($x^2$ · 1df = 2.34). The difference between board members expecting to serve just one term and all other categories, however, is significant ($x^2$ · 1df = 10.63). Contrary to expectations, appointed board members are more likely than elected members to see themselves limited to one term.

TABLE 8. Number of terms state school board members feel they are likely to serve.

| Number of terms: | Appointed Boards n = 119 | Elected Boards n = 63 | Total n = 182 |
|---|---|---|---|
| indefinitely | 15% | 11% | 14% |
| almost indefinitely | 21 | 41 | 28 |
| at least two terms | 39 | 43 | 40 |
| probably only one term | 24 | 5 | 18 |

## Concluding Remarks and Some Speculation

We began this discussion by presenting some data which we believe challenges the longstanding proposition that the member composition of state boards of education is a function of the selection process. Accepting our data and rejecting the proposition left us with the problem of explanation. We believed that the reason state board composition was not influenced by the selection process might be that the processes were not as we understood them to be. In this research report we have investigated the board

selection processes in some detail and we now wish to try to review these findings to see whether we can propose an explanation. In doing so we have found it necessary to go beyond our data and to speculate freely.

The appointment process, as we discovered it, might be characterized by the following statements: although some "campaign" for the nomination, most are surprised to receive a call asking of their interest; although the governor occasionally seeks out a candidate for conversation, he usually has little direct contact with them; the governors' nominations are seldom challenged; in most states a rationalized structure for securing candidates is not available to the governor and he must, apparently, rely upon friends, professional interests, and universal standards of acceptability in making his choices.

The election process, to our considerable surprise, was not well described by terms such as "campaign" or "struggle" or "issues." Even partisan election to the state board is low-keyed and low-financed. The median successful candidate apparently spends less than ninety-five hours in campaign activities en route to the board and offers but one or two speeches.

The ingrained fear of educators that elected members will "use" the state board as a stepping-stone to higher office was shown to be inapplicable to state school board members. It may be politically expedient to serve on an urban board or on a board of higher education, but there appears to be no gain in serving on a state board of education.

Having completed a review of the selection process, we found it

necessary to look further for an explanation to the equifinality of board member selection. We have provided evidence for an argument that elected board members are not different from appointed members, because the election process is of low intensity and not typical of political elections as we generally think of them. We can ask further questions, however: Why are board elections the way they are? Why is the appointment process so singularly uninteresting and of such narrow scope? To answer these questions we must take leave of our data.

In order to explain why the selection process is of so little interest, and why the board members selected by a variety of processes seem so similar, it seems necessary to view our findings as symptomatic only. The reason board members are so much alike is that no one expects the board to be very influential in the formulation or implementation of state educational policy.

We reach this conclusion by conjecturing that if the state board were perceived as important, there would be a great deal of noise regarding the selection of new members. The above would seem to be at least a reasonable conjecture. It is even more appealing because we can work from this assumption back to our data.

If, as we argue, no one looks to the state board to fulfill a "mission," neither the governor nor the electors have useful criteria upon which to make their selections. The pool of persons that make "suitable" candidates (i.e., electable or appointable) to the state board becomes small and homogeneous, consisting only of main-line protestant, professional, college-educated, and civic-oriented persons with a demonstrable interest

in education.[1]

The low visibility of the board in most states makes it unlikely that the governor will see his way clear to make selection of candidates who might be controversial: he expects neither support nor opposition; he has no reason to take any risks. Further, he is restricted by statute in most states regarding the party composition of the board. Having little interest, he turns to his advisors or representatives of educational professions for assistance.

The electorate, finding it impossible to make substantive-based choices for membership to an unknown board, must rely upon educational reputation and general status. These are the same and only criteria available to the governor, and explain why board composition is so predictable.

We may conclude by restating our position. Scholars focusing upon the question of appropriate selection procedures for state school board members are engaging in naught but scholasticism. Board members are of a kind because few of the clientele care about the state board of education, and therefore only universalistic and undifferentiating standards of public service are applied in selecting board members. We have perhaps taken the long route to the observation that what we need to study is the policy role of the state board. Might it be the case that we have been making an erroneous assumption here as well?

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[1]Evidence regarding educational attainment of state board members was presented above. Evidence regarding religious, political and civic characterizations is available from the writer.